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Connecting Stitches: Tradition and Innovation in Illinois Quilts

An exhibition organized by the Illinois State Museum to celebrate the Illinois Quilt Research Project

Illinois State Museum
Springfield
November 21, 1993 through
February 13, 1994

Southern Illinois Arts
and Crafts Marketplace
Rend Lake
March 5 through
May 6, 1994

Illinois Arts Gallery
Chicago
June 1 through
August 12, 1994

Quilting traditions came to America with the earliest European colonists. In America, the craft of quilting evolved into an art form that allowed quilters to express their thoughts, values, and creativity. Quilters have rarely thought of themselves as artists—having learned their craft from other quilters and having practiced the fundamentals of design almost instinctively. As an expression of the common people, quilts are considered folk art. Quilts are also an expression of women's culture, which values function, beauty, and craftsmanship.



*"Mary's
Baltimore &
Beyond" quilt, by Marian
Brockschmidt, 1990, Springfield,
Sangamon Co. The Baltimore album quilts of
the mid-nineteenth century showcased exquisite
applique work and inspired creativity in pattern
design. Quilters today continue to strive
for excellence in workmanship as they work
within this traditional context. 90" x 88".
cotton. Loaned by Marian Brockschmidt.*



*"Ned's Schoolhouse" quilt, by Mary Ann
DeWitte-Chatterton, 1987, Morrison,
Whiteside Co. Traditionally quilts feature
a strong center of interest; however,
Mary Ann has chosen to place the ever
popular Schoolhouse pattern at the
border of her quilt. Adding to her
creative interpretation is a nighttime
color scheme and the illusion of
intersecting streets with stoplights
flashing red, green, & yellow. 71" x
71". Cotton. Loaned by Ned J.
Nesti, Jr.*

The sweeping popularity of quilting through many generations, regions, and cultural groups in America deserves consideration. Of the many folk art forms, quilting has involved the largest number of artists and enjoyed the longest period of popularity. The large number of quilts that exist today attest to the widespread practice of this craft. The Illinois Quilt Research Project registered over 15,000 quilts in Illinois and that can only represent a small portion of the total number that reside in the state at this time. Many more quilts probably were used until they became frayed and torn and then were discarded. The valuable information collected on quilts and quiltmakers through the IQRP and the state quilt research projects

in other states will provide a database for the systematic study of this important folk art.



Sampler quilt, by friends of Harriet Hartenbower, 1898, Lostant, La Salle Co. The stitches connecting pieces of fabric in quilting also represent the bonds of friendship among women. Harriet's friends each made and signed a block for this quilt as she was preparing to move to Bloomington. Before she left, they all gathered to do the quilting. 86" x 64". Cotton. Loaned by Carol A. Krieder.

The present exhibit of quilts was selected from the group of quilts registered through the Illinois Quilt

Research Project between 1988 and

1993. IQRP is a project of

the Land of Lincoln Quilters

Association and the Early

American Museum (Mahomet),



Detail of String quilt top, By Mary Goudy, ca. 1898, Olney, Richland Co. Mary sewed 1/4" strips of fabric to a foundation fabric in designs of her own choosing for this lively and imaginative quilt. The technique was discussed in nineteenth-century magazines but few quilters tried this nontraditional approach. 83" x 67". Cotton. Loaned by Joe G. & Elizabeth Weiler.

who organized 30 quilt registration days throughout the state. The quilts on exhibit represent enduring traditions, design fundamentals, and expressions of the human spirit. Quilters contribute their own personal innovations to the design and message of their quilts.

Older quilts and newer quilts hung side by side illustrate these enduring traditions and personal innovations. While some state quilt research projects have only registered old quilts, the IQRP, operating under the premise that the present will soon be history, chose to register any completed bed or crib quilt, even if it had been made yesterday. The expanded scope of the Illinois project recognizes the enormous contributions of contemporary quiltmakers and allows for meaningful comparisons and connections with the past.

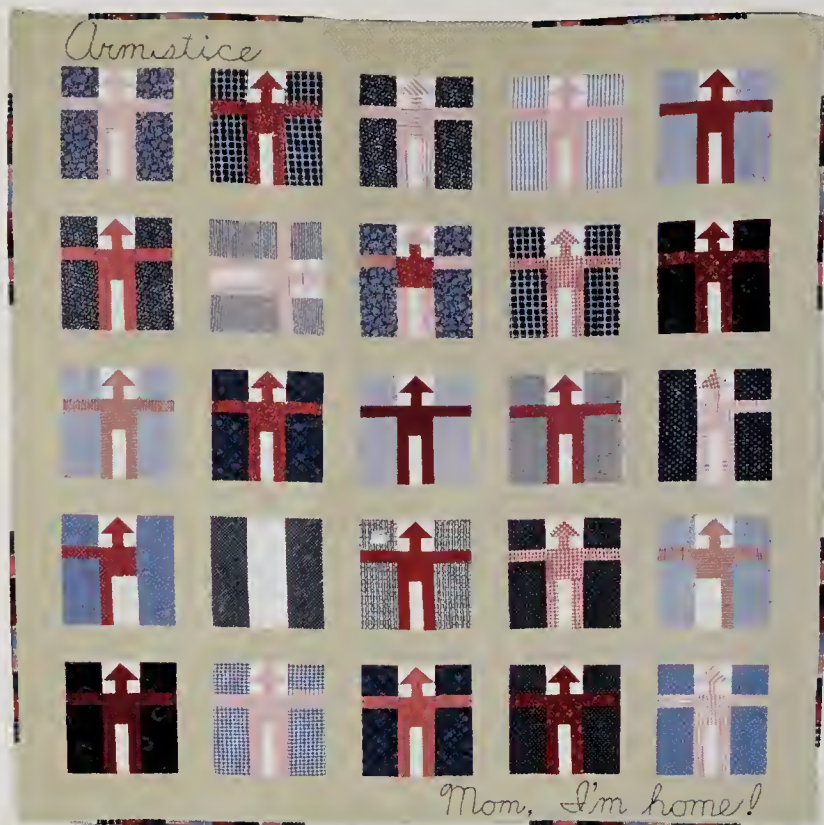
Like the quilting stitch that binds the layers of a quilt together, the love of quilts and quilting has offered and continues to offer connections between people of different backgrounds and generations. It is the intent of this exhibit to illustrate these "connecting stitches" and to celebrate the diversity and beauty of Illinois quilts.

"Crazy Days and Crazy Ways" quilt, by Irene Boyer, 1978-1983, Springfield, Sangamon Co. Using the crazy quilt tradition, Irene Boyer also chose to depict favorite things in her life on her quilt made from fabrics and ties given to her by friends and family. Like Belle's quilt, Irene's quilt showcases her mastery of embroidery skills. 90" x 74". Satin, silk, velvet, corduroy, rayon, polyester. Loaned by Irene & Steve Boyer.



Crazy quilt, by Belle English, 1885-1887, Elmwood, Peoria Co. Late nineteenth-century tastes for extravagant ornament created a new quilt form—the crazy quilt. Belle English stitched representations of things important to her and the initials of her friends and family into this quilt, including the hand and initials of her one-year-old daughter and the elastic sleeve band her husband wore at their wedding in 1883. The back of the quilt is lined with material from her wedding dress. 73" x 68". Satin, velvet, cotton, linen, silk. Loaned by Bernice & Elwyn Rodgers.





Above left: "Armistice: Mom, I'm Home" quilt, by Carlene Buck, 1987, Buffalo Grove, Lake Co. Using the traditional Tin Man pattern, Carlene has created a thoughtful tribute to the soldiers who have made personal sacrifices in foreign wars, especially her friends who served in Vietnam and have returned home with outstretched arms. 62" x 63". Cotton. Loaned by Carlene Buck.



Above right: Fairy quilt, by Ruby Lundgren, 1936, Rockford, Winnebago Co. Inspired by the cover of a 1925 catalog, Ruby created an appliqued, embroidered and tinted reproduction in a quilt, at her daughter's request. This exquisite quilt demonstrates the versatility of fabrics as media in the hands of an artist with superior needle skills. 97" x 76". Cotton. Private collection.

Wreath of Roses with Redbirds applique quilt, by CMW, 1859, DeKalb Co. Based on a popular mid-nineteenth century pattern, the Wreath of Roses, this extraordinary quilt owes its special appeal to the appliqued sashing, stuffed quilting inside the wreaths, and borders of cheerful redbirds. 91" x 79". Cotton. Loaned by Ellwood House Association & Museum.



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Mosaic quilt, pieced by Albert Small and quilted by his wife Eva and their daughter-in-law, Marian, 1937, Ottawa, La Salle Co. Albert Small used the nineteenth-century tradition of the hexagonal one-patch quilt to create his own, twentieth-century compositions that resonate with color and pattern. A man of contrasts, Mr. Small was a large man who handled explosives and heavy machinery at a quarry by day, and a needle and tiny pieces of cloth by night. Albert challenged himself to make a bed-size quilt with the record number of pieces and ultimately made three quilt tops, the last one with 123,200 hexagons, each $\frac{1}{4}$ " wide. This is his first attempt; 36,141 hexagons, each $\frac{3}{4}$ " wide. 108" x 81". Cotton. Illinois State Museum collection, gift of William A. Small and Evelyn Small Carter.



Checklist of the Exhibition

not all quilts are shown at all locations

Family Traditions

Engagement Ring quilt, 1970
By Cherita Page Walker,
Zeigler, Franklin Co.
Loaned by Cherita Page Walker

Flower Basket quilt, 1958
By Mary Gustin Page (Cherita's mother),
Elizabethtown, Hardin Co.
Loaned by Merdith Walker

Com & Beans quilt, 1930-1940
Pieced by Mary Gustin Page and quilted
by Lela Frailey Gustin
(Cherita's grandmother),
Elizabethtown, Hardin Co.
Loaned by Cherita Page Walker

Log Cabin quilt, 1895-1897 & 1886
By Mary Julia Lackey Frailey
(Cherita's great grandmother), and
quilted by Cherita Page Walker,
Elizabethtown, Hardin Co.
Loaned by Cherita Page Walker

Jackson Star quilt, 1849 & 1990
Pieced by Leah Thornburgh,
southeast of Havana, Mason Co.
Set together and quilted by Alice Smith
(great granddaughter),
Decatur, Macon Co.
Private collection

Mastery of Traditional Techniques

Quilting:

Wholecloth cradle quilt, ca. 1850-1853
By Mary Frances Degge,
Petersburg, Menard Co.
Illinois State Museum collection,
gift of Catherine Degge Mars

Single Irish Chain quilt, 1988
By Jackie McFadden,
Gifford, Champaign Co.
Loaned by Jackie McFadden

Piecing:

Mariner's Compass quilt, ca. 1880
By Verdilla Zook,
Harperville, DuPage Co.
Loaned by Dr. & Mrs. Rollin Taecker

New York Beauty quilt, ca. 1932
By Johanna Foehr Kolling,
Loda, Iroquois Co.
Loaned by Shirley J. Meece

Appliqué:

"Mary's Baltimore & Beyond" quilt, 1990
By Marian Brockschmidt,
Springfield, Sangamon Co.
Loaned by Marian Brockschmidt

Wreath of Roses & Red Bird
appliqué quilt, 1859
By CMW, DeKalb Co.
Loaned by Ellwood House
Association & Museum

Vases of Flowers appliqué quilt, ca. 1865
By Mrs. Horn, Mason City, Mason Co.
Loaned by Suetta Martin

Embroidery:

Crazy quilt, 1885-1887
By Belle English, Elmwood, Peoria Co.
Loaned by Bernice & Elwyn Rodgers

"Crazy Days and Crazy Ways" quilt,
1978-1983
By Irene Boyer,
Springfield, Sangamon Co.
Loaned by Irene & Steve Boyer

Enduring Patterns

Sampler quilt, 1893
By friends of Harriet Hartenbower,
Lostant, La Salle Co.
Loaned by Carol A. Krieder

Sampler quilt, 1977-1988
By Laurel Bangert Goff,
Springfield, Sangamon Co.
Loaned by James R. Goff family

Nine Patch quilt, ca. 1940
By Grace Stetson,
Neponset, Bureau Co.
Loaned by Nancy Stetson

Nine Patch quilt, ca. 1875-1885
By Mary Fivored Munch,
Kirkwood, Warren Co.
Loaned by Sarabelle O'Daniel

Feathered Star Sampler quilt, 1987
By Christine Schnauffer,
Colona, Henry Co.
Loaned by Christine Schnauffer

Blazing Star quilt, ca. 1860
by Sara Morey,
New Canton, Pike Co.
Loaned by Mary Dell Borrowman

Lily Basket quilt, ca. 1880
By Magdalena Yoder,
Arthur, Douglas Co.
Loaned by Ann Wasserman

Flower Basket quilt, 1985
By Mildred Bushart,
Ashmore, Coles Co.
Loaned by Mildred Bushart

Cake Stand quilt, 1981
By Anna Roberts Borders,
Hillsboro, Montgomery Co.
Loaned by Anna Roberts Borders

Log Cabin quilt, 1864
By Betsy Snell Miller,
Aurora, Kane Co.
Illinois State Museum collection,
gift of Mrs. Elwin Sperry

Apartment quilt, 1980-1981
By Sandra Klouda,
Downers Grove, DuPage Co.
Loaned by Sandra Klouda

Expressions of a Community Aesthetic

Rhythm:

"Changed Perspective" quilt, 1988
By Nancy Korhorn Green,
LaGrange, DuPage Co.
Loaned by John & Nancy Green

Dresden Star quilt, 1990
By Victorena Stanis,
Westville, Vermilion Co.
Loaned by Victorena Stanis

Princess Feather quilt, ca. 1860
By Rebecca Smith,
Decatur, Macon Co.
Loaned by Mildred Zindel

Appliqué Flowers quilt, 1868
By Caroline Koehler,
Freeport, Stephenson Co.
Loaned by Mary Guentner

Tulip Vase appliqué quilt, ca. 1870
By Kathryn Schleisinger Kaiser,
Mendota, La Salle Co.
Illinois State Museum collection,
gift of Arlene Kaiser Carter

Log Cabin quilt, ca. 1870
By Anna Fink, Pekin, Tazewell Co.
Loaned by Johanna Alfs Bruns &
Martha Alfs Madarasz

Inner City quilt, 1989
By Leona Pahlmeyer,
Litchfield, Montgomery Co.
Loaned by Leona Pahlmeyer

Harmony and Contrast:

Honeycomb or Hexagon quilt, 1937
Pieced by Albert Small and quilted
by his wife Eva and their
daughter-in-law Marian,
Ottawa, La Salle Co.
Illinois State Museum collection, gift of
William A. Small & Evelyn Small Carter

"Ned's Schoolhouse" quilt, 1987
By Mary Ann DeWitte-Chatterton,
Morrison, Whiteside Co.
Loaned by Ned J. Nesti, Jr.

Crazy quilt, ca. 1928
By Hattie, Charlie Marie & Mamie Holliday,
Chicago, Cook Co.
Loaned by Ann C. Saunders

"Grandma Cherry Quilt" in Broken Dishes
pattern, ca. 1930s
By Irena Cherry, Geneseo, Henry Co.
Private collection

Expressions of the Human Spirit

Family and Community:

Farm Scene quilt, 1985-1989
By Rosalie Brackebusch,
Divernon, Sangamon Co.
Loaned by Scott Brackebusch

"The Chicago Quilt", 1977-1982
By Susan Auerbach,
Riverwood, Lake Co.
Loaned by Lisa Anne Auerbach

"Gem of the Prairie" quilt, 1985
Designed by Ann Pastucha, made by
Gems of the Prairies Quilters,
Peoria, Peoria Co.
Loaned by Gems of the Prairie Quilters,
Peoria

Friendship quilt, ca. 1890
Possibly made by S. A. Mead,
Ludlow, Champaign Co.
Loaned by Mary Myrick: Ludlow
Methodist Church

"Yesterday's Remembered" quilt, 1980-1982
Pieced by Kathryn Kennedy,
Wilmington, Will Co. Quilted by Barbara
Miller, Arthur, Moultrie Co.
Loaned by Kathryn Kennedy

Social Causes:

Crazy Quilt, 1898
By Sarah Walker Marshall Lindsay,
Galesburg, Knox Co.
Loaned by Illinois Historic Preservation
Agency, Division of Historic Sites

Wheel Spokes, 1889
By Women's Christian Temperance
Union, Harvard, McHenry Co.
Loaned by Greater Harvard Area
Historical Society Museum

War and Patriotism:

GAR Reunion quilt, 1894
Maker unknown, Nebo, Pike Co.
Private collection

"Armistice: Mom, I'm Home" quilt, 1987
By Carlene Buck, Buffalo Grove, Lake Co.
Loaned by Carlene Buck

"Of Thee I Sing" quilt, 1985-1986
By Anne Stephens Marcisz,
LaGrange, Cook Co.
Loaned by Anne Stephens Marcisz

Individuality:

String quilt, ca. 1898
By Mary Goudy, Olney, Richland Co.
Loaned by Joe G. & Elizabeth Weiler

Fairy quilt, 1936
By Ruby Lundgren,
Rockford, Winnebago Co.
Private collection

"Once Upon a Time" quilt, 1986
By Karen L. Keller,
Chrisman, Edgar Co.
Loaned by Karen L. Keller

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With heartfelt gratitude,
Janice Tauer Wass
Curator of Decorative Arts